

PUPPIES FOR PAROLE

3,000th ADOPTION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2015



Rescuing dogs from a lifetime of pain...

Releasing people to a lifetime of change.

Missouri Department of Corrections



Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor

George A. Lombardi
Director

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PUPPIES FOR PAROLE

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Cover: Natalie
Jefferson County Courthouse

Mission

To provide a safe, stable environment for dogs who have been abused or abandoned and transform them into adoptable animals, while creating an atmosphere for offenders to engage in positive behaviors outside themselves.

Letter from the Director



On Feb. 1, 2015, the Puppies for Parole program celebrated its fifth anniversary. As we crossed our 3,000th adoption threshold, the program continues to make a positive impact on the lives of those that adopt the dogs and on the offender handlers who train them.

Since our last newsletter we've seen this positive impact reach the courtroom. Natalie, a court dog that is serving in the 23rd Circuit Court in Jefferson County, has proven to be a valuable asset to children testifying during difficult cases. Natalie's role has been so significant Missouri Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary Russell suggested in her column "Justice Matters" that other courts across Missouri should consider adopting a dog from P4P. Her column made such an impact that other courts from around the state inquired about adopting an Advanced P4P dog. Most recently, the 10th Circuit Court in Ralls County adopted its own courthouse dog named Sterling.

Throughout the years, I have been able to attend a number of graduation ceremonies. Each one of them has been a pleasure for me because I get to see the transformative power this program has on the offender handlers. Some of our institutions host these graduation ceremonies and pass the leash from the handlers to the dog's new owners. That is a significant moment for all involved. Not only is the dog moving into a new forever home, but the offenders that helped trained the dog get to see the joy they have brought to a family, an individual or organization. By bringing about those feelings, the program is fulfilling its mission of teaching offender handlers about compassion.

Although these success stories give credence to the work all the volunteers and offender handlers do to make these dogs more adoptable, this program would not have been successful without the involvement of our custody staff. Their ability to embrace P4P over the years has been paramount to its success, while fostering a safe, more secure prison environment.

I am always grateful for those who have helped with the program's development and growth throughout the years. It's been five years since we started giving dogs a second chance, while having a positive impact on offenders and staff at the institutional level. We look forward to doing this for years to come.

George A. Lombardi
Director
Missouri Department of Corrections



Pawsitive Effects

High ranking custody officer praises P4P program

Since its inception in 2010, the Puppies for Parole program has adopted more than 3,000 dogs and those dogs have had a profound impact on thousands of lives, including the families who adopt the dogs and the offender handlers that train them. But the impact of the program also extends to the staff members at the institutions. Captain Richard Corser from the Jefferson City Correctional Center wanted to tell Department of Corrections Director George A. Lombardi about this impact in a letter:

"Sir,

There are a few things I would like to relay to you about the Puppies for Parole program. I have seen hardened and hateful inmates that spend many days in the Ad-Seg units do their best to stay out of the 'hole,' and 'walk the line' so they can take care of a dog. Inmates that had no pride or no self esteem come up to me with the pride of a new parent to be able to show me

what they taught their dog this week. Inmates that shied away from responsibility now enjoy the responsibility they have of taking care of a life. Inmates that would not normally get along or try to help each other, due to prison ways, now take the time to walk their neighbor's dog because they are not in the unit or buy food items from the canteen so all the dogs have treats. I see a community of misfits doing the right thing as a team or even a family to take care of all the dogs.

On the other hand, I see dogs that come into the program, scared and unable to get along with other dogs because the dogs don't eat, are timid and unsure of their surroundings, or are aggressive. After they meet their human companion/trainer for the first time and over a few days, they turn into best friends. I see a positive program that on most occasions saves a dog's life and gives it a chance to love and show it can become a friend or a family member. At the same time, the dogs teach the inmates that they are not so tough, not so hard and not so mean that they are unable to show compassion for something that shows unconditional love to them. I truly see inmates care and love these dogs.

Over the past few years on my Mondays on my way to work, I stop by the store on my way to work and I get a box or two of hard treats for dogs. I come into the office to get my tasks ready for the day's shift. I sit around and discuss the daily activities with my assistant watch commanders, and I start breaking the dog treats into smaller pieces so they will last longer and the dogs feel they get more. At first, I did this by myself, but as time went on, the lieutenants started helping me break the treats up. As I did my rounds to all the units, I would stop and see the dog handlers and the dogs. I would give the dogs the treats and see the new tricks they learned. When I first started this, I did it by myself. Now other staff members like to walk with me during my rounds to feed and see the dogs. The dog handlers are always grateful and always say thanks captain for the treats.

I did not get a chance to adopt a dog from the JCCC program, as I was too far down the list to get the one I wanted. But I adopted one from Algoa Correctional Center's dog program for my mom and she loves her dog.

Thanks for a great program."

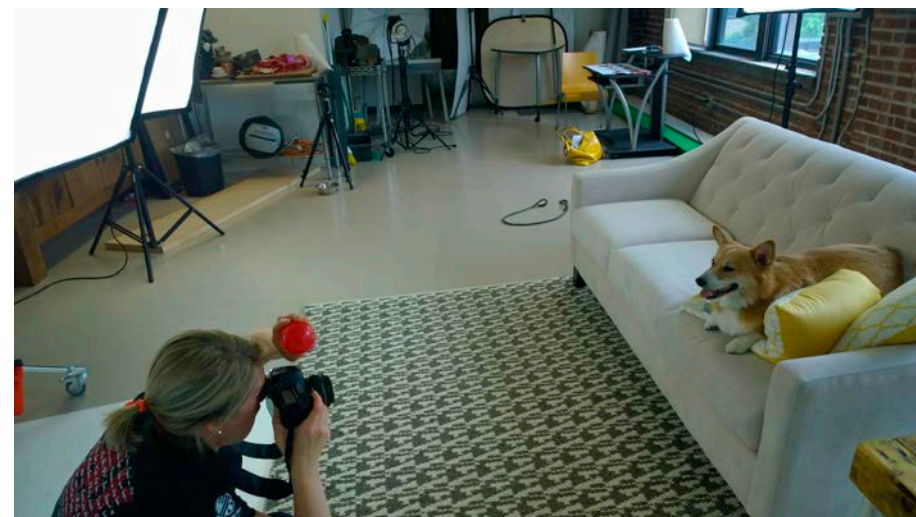
-Captain Richard Corser



Dobbie

Dobbie may not be the magical house elf companion of the Harry Potter films, but this little dog is making magic in front of a different set of cameras. The Puppies for Parole graduate appeared in several magazine advertisements for Furminator professional pet grooming products. Dobbie did a two-hour photo shoot in St. Louis in 2014 and the ads featuring the photos from the session have appeared in Dog Fancy, Modern Dog and The Bark.

Dobbie was a 1-year-old tan and white Corgi surrendered by his owners when he entered the P4P program at Northeast



Correctional Center in early 2012. He was quickly adopted into his forever home by Crystal Wheeler and her family after his graduation and is a beloved friend to her young daughter. “His Furriness” as he is known to Crystal and her family is doing great.

“He loves to take naps with my daughter when he isn’t playing fetch. He is a good sport and lets her dress him up in tutus and Superman capes. When he naps, he usually lies on his back with his little legs in the air. He chases around another family dog, a mastiff, and they get along great. We go for walks and play catch and tug. He gets a nap when my daughter lets him. We do so love him. He’s a great dog.”



Crystal was contacted by author Elaine Gewirtz for Dog Fancy Magazine. The magazine ran a story about Dobbie and the P4P program titled, “From Parolee to Supermodel,” in the February 2015 issue. The story focused on how a pound dog, trained by offenders, made it into a national ad for Furminator.



The name Baloo will forever be tied to the sleepy, easy-going bear in Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book." In the 19th-century classic and all of its adaptations, the fun-loving character, along with a panther named Bagheera, assumes the care and teaching of a little boy lost in the treacherous jungle world they live in. In the real world, animals are often neglected or hurt, and sometimes they need our help to put a spring back into their step.

Algoa Correctional Center (ACC) in Jefferson City, Missouri, recently held a graduation ceremony for dogs graduating from its S.T.A.R.S. Puppies for Parole program. Among the dogs graduating was Baloo, who was ACC's 200th graduate. Looking a bit like a little polar bear, Baloo was a 5-year-old Great Pyrenees that came into the P4P program after being picked up as a stray by the Garrett Animal Shelter in Fulton, Missouri. A shadow of the dog he could be, Baloo was malnourished and matted with sores and clearly in need of the bare necessities of care. In fact, it was unclear if Baloo would make it to his graduation day because he had contracted an autoimmune disease and was given medication that he would continue to need for the rest of his life. The offender handlers got to work and helped him turn the corner, while a young woman working at the institution decided to give

him a forever home when he graduated.

Although Baloo was an important milestone in ACC's S.T.A.R.S. Puppies for Parole program because he was the 200th dog adopted, he wasn't adopted because of that milestone. It was love at first sight.

"For me, it was love at first sight with Baloo. I met him shortly after he arrived at Algoa, when he was still in really bad shape, weighing around 80 pounds, when he should have weighed about 120. He had sores on his feet and no appetite. Regardless of his health, I knew I wanted that dog and that he needed a good home. Baloo was very sick, but the dedication shown by the P4P coordinators, staff and Baloo's handlers helped to pull him through. Since coming to his forever home, Baloo continues to get healthier and more energetic all the time. When first at the institution, Baloo never got excited about much. He would saunter around and had a hard time getting up.

Toward the end of his stay at Algoa and in his transition to my home,

“ This is a wonderful program for the dogs, offenders and staff at the department.

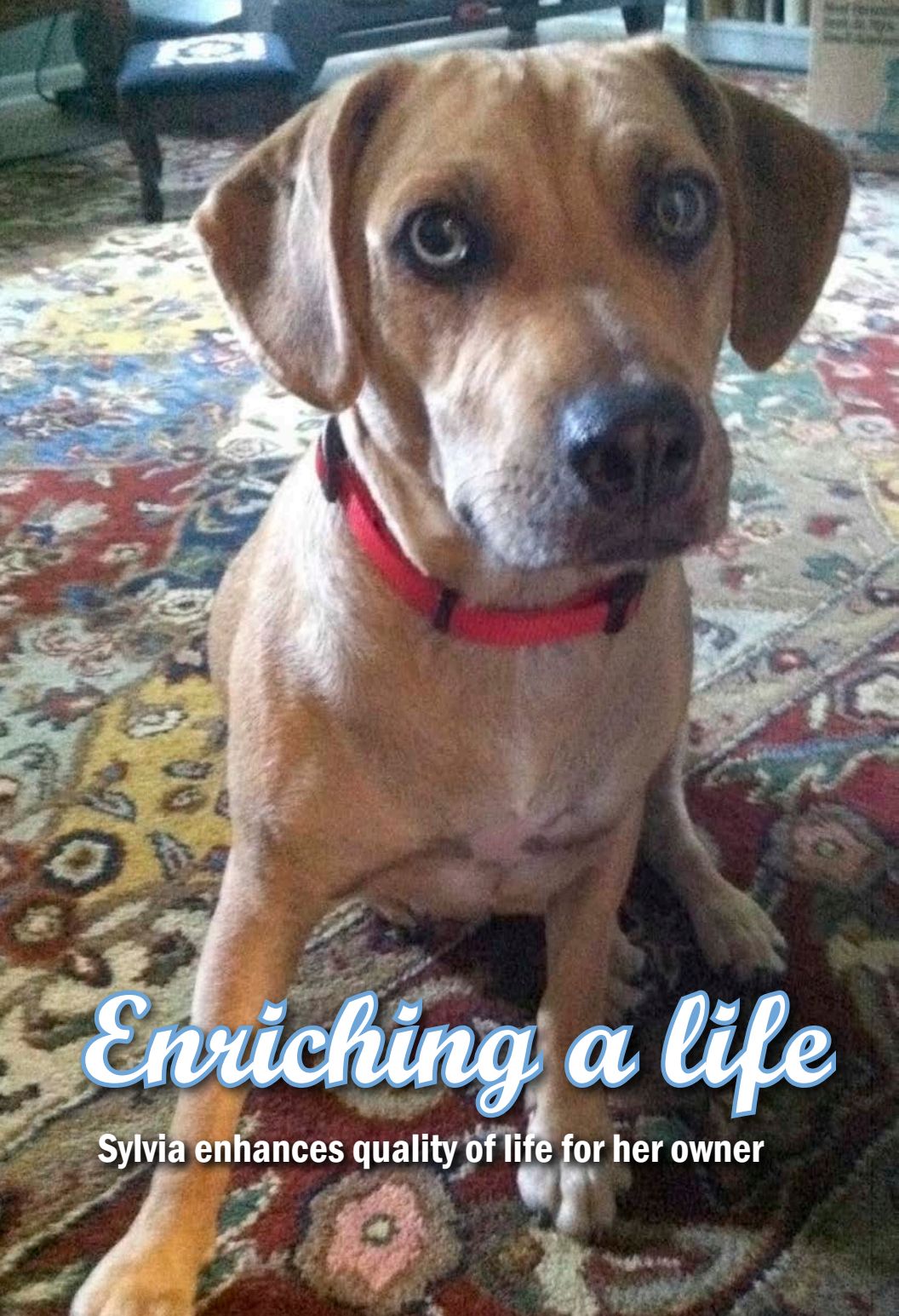
– JCCC staff member

Baloo now runs and jumps and even smiles like a big puppy. Baloo has been a wonderful addition to my family. He lifts our spirits on a daily basis and can always put a smile on my face...

” Baloo has never met a stranger. He loves everyone and isn't shy

about sticking his snout under your hand for a petting. Anyone that has ever met my big 'polar bear' can't help but to love him. I am often asked, 'Do you walk him or does he walk you?' The healthier he gets, the more he makes me run along with him! It certainly makes me get my exercise. Baloo hasn't warmed up to any toys yet, but give him a bone and he will be content until he finishes the whole thing...

This is a wonderful program for the dogs, offenders and staff at the department. The dogs are loved here in the institutions almost as much as they are in their homes. I have seen some of the most rough looking offenders get down to pet one of the little dogs just as gently as can be. I have witnessed some dogs come in that are in bad shape, like Baloo, that the offenders have loved and cared for into a healthier, happier life. I met my best friend Baloo through Puppies for Parole, and I know many others will too."



Enriching a life

Sylvia enhances quality of life for her owner

In the fall 2014, Jefferson City Correctional Center (JCCC) Warden Jay Cassady received a letter from Beth, a teacher at Hawthorn Children's Psychiatric Hospital, about how happy she was with Sylvia, a dog she adopted for her elderly mother. Her mother, who recently moved in with her, is less stable on her feet than she used to be. She wanted a dog and Beth was 100 percent supportive of the idea, but they had a few conditions. It needed to be a shelter animal and her mother needed a dog that would walk politely on a leash. They were not successful in finding that combination in St. Louis, where they live, until they discovered Puppies for Parole.

Beth contacted the P4P coordinator at JCCC and based on her requirements of the dogs they had, Sylvia was hands down the best choice. Sylvia was a 3-year-old mixed breed dog that came into the P4P program because her owner surrendered her to the Jefferson City Animal Shelter.

Beth and her mother visited the institution to meet Sylvia while she was still undergoing training and following that meeting they were certain they wanted to adopt her. The coordinator said they could take her that day, but after explaining about the graduation ceremony that would take place, Beth and her mother agreed that it was important for the offenders to have the opportunity to see Sylvia

graduate and properly say goodbye.

Beth and her mother came to pick up Sylvia on her graduation day from JCCC. They were impressed with the quiet and respect the offenders offered one another and the

staff. But what really made an impression was that, rather than celebrate their accomplishment with sandwiches and cake after the ceremony, Sylvia's handlers spent every minute they had teaching the two women how to work with Sylvia.

Beth said that, "He explained many of the special commands he'd strengthened in Sylvia

“ Sylvia has enhanced the quality and the length of my mother's life. It will be happier and richer because she has Sylvia in it. ”

because my mother is older. His expertise and willingness to work with Sylvia has made my mother's life richer."

Such is the wide-ranging impact of this program that offenders benefit as much from the training process as the new owner does when they take a dog home. As part of this process, offender handlers grow

by regularly journaling about each dog they train, which can then be given to adopters to help them get to know their dog. These writings reveal the level of introspection on the part of handlers and

the immersion of living with the dogs 24/7 that contributes to the success of the program.

Sylvia's handlers kept insightful notes on her training. Here is an excerpt:

"Sylvia arrived skittish and unsure. She had not been socialized and became stressed around groups of people and unfamiliar noises (loud or not). Being calm and assertive with her and using positive training



techniques were utilized to bring her out of most of this...

By teaching her obedience commands, such as, sit, down, wait, stay, stop, come, and focus; we were able to redirect her away from the things she feared or was unsure of...

Since Sylvia was so sensitive, it was imperative that she not

be given any harsh toned corrections. Doing so would have broken the trust bond that we as handlers had established...

A ball became a very valuable learning tool for her. After we asked her to wait, we

would throw the ball and then release her to go get it. We did not allow the ball to become an obsession, only a tool to keep her focused."

Sylvia's handlers noted in particular the bittersweet end that comes when they pass the leash to a new owner. With Sylvia, they took comfort knowing she was going to a good home.

"When we get a dog to train, we understand that it is not our dog.



We care for it, train it, and see to its needs. Even knowing that the dog we have is not ours to keep, one comes along once in awhile that captures our hearts. Sylvia was one of those for us. When we met Beth and her mother, we knew that Sylvia would be loved and cared for just as we loved and cared for her. We pray that they will all have many joyful and loving years together."

Beth said her mother and Sylvia are getting along great, taking walks to help her mother get her exercise.

"Mother and Sylvia take multiple walks every day. Mother has poor circulation in her legs, so she

must continue exercising her legs daily. Sylvia loves to walk outside, so the two of them go out more often than perhaps Sylvia needs to, but mother tells me that every day they walk a little farther and every day she feels a little more confident on her feet. Walking Sylvia helps keep them both healthy."

Beth is quick to lavish praise on the offender handlers who worked with Sylvia, saying that they have given her mother a gift that she can never repay.

"Sylvia has enhanced the quality and the length of my mother's life. It will be happier and richer because she has Sylvia in it."



Natalie



Courting success

Missouri courts have gone to the dogs

In her column “Justice Matters,” Missouri Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary R. Russell quipped, “Despite what a casual observer may see in the hallways of some of our courthouses, Missouri’s courts have not ‘gone to the dogs.’” All the same, Advanced P4P helper dogs may soon be popping up in Missouri courtrooms, offering a welcome salve to the tension and stress that often accompanies difficult cases. And it was a 1-year-old Weimaraner/Lab/German Shorthaired pointer mix named Natalie that paved the way. Picked up as a stray by the

Cameron Animal Shelter in 2013, Natalie entered the P4P program at Crossroads Correctional Center malnourished and in poor condition. But hard times did not dampen this dog’s spirit and handlers and staff knew early on that she was very special. About that time, a not-for-profit group, Courthouse Paws, was formed at the Jefferson County Courthouse, following a meeting between attorney Alice Kramer and court reporter Charmaine Spradling. After hearing some particularly difficult testimony from a child, the animal lovers reasoned that a cold nose and

a wagging tail might ease the stress of having to tell a scary, embarrassing story to a room full of strangers. Court clerk Brenda Pigg happened upon their discussion and was also recruited to help. In their initial search, the group found out very quickly that fully trained service dogs were expensive and probably not necessary in for the role of comfort dog. With very little funding, they sought help in the form of COMTREA and Puppies for Parole. They partnered with Judy Finnegan and Bob Hoffman of COMTREA, and after much discussion, Natalie was selected for advanced training because she is a natural with people, especially children.

Today, Natalie is employed at the 23rd Circuit Court in Jefferson County. She is handled by volunteers that take her to treatment court, domestic court and criminal trials. She will sit with children on the witness stand as they testify in sex abuse cases and custody proceedings, when

children are reluctant to express their feelings about their living arrangements.

“Every time Natalie works a courtroom, she amazes me by seeking out someone who is nervous or anxious,” said Pigg, who adopted Natalie. “She once helped calm an angry parent during a termination of parental rights hearing. Sensing his mood, Natalie walked up to the man and put her head in his lap. With his attention on

the dog, the situation de-escalated from what might have become a security concern.”

” Since seeing Natalie in action on her

first day, Judge Lisa K. Page encouraged the other judges at the courthouse to use Natalie in their divisions because she believes that a dog can change the atmosphere of the courtroom.

“Dogs are so normal in an abnormal and very stressful situation,” Judge Page said. “In my first case with Natalie present, a little girl dropped something of a bomb in her testimony. It took me a minute

“
**Dogs are so normal
in an abnormal
and very stressful
situation.**

– 23rd Circuit Court
Judge Lisa K. Page



to collect my thoughts to ask her follow up questions so we were both petting Natalie and talking about how sweet she is.”

Judge Page says Natalie tames some of the natural animosity one finds in contested proceedings and she does more than help the litigants. “Her impact on staff is so positive. Many times after dealing with a difficult case or litigant you will see a staff person visiting Natalie.”

Judge Page described one of Natalie’s successes in the courtroom where a young boy was called to testify. “There was clearly something wrong with this child. I found it interesting

that he refused to interact with Natalie and that Natalie seemed to shy away from him. It confirmed my concerns about him and now he is receiving the appropriate mental health testing and treatment. The case would probably have had the same result, but the interaction I observed confirmed what I suspected throughout all the other evidence presented that day. Interestingly, his sister seemed to derive great comfort from Natalie throughout her testimony.”

Judge Page was cautiously optimistic about having a dog in the courtroom when approached with the idea.

“It seemed too ‘touchy feely’ at first, but I thought it might be beneficial,” she said. “I was so wrong. Her effect is not ‘touchy feely’ in the least, but results in true trauma management for everyone in the courthouse. Natalie is a true blessing.”

Natalie has a pillow to lie on in the courtroom and a cozy bed in Pigg’s office at the courthouse, “

but at the end of the day, she goes home with her. “My husband and I became the placement home sort of by default,” Pigg said. “There were a few other volunteers that offered a home to Natalie, but for a variety of reasons, the placement did not materialize. So, I stepped up and made room for one more at our house.”

Natalie became the third dog adopted by Pigg and her husband, Bob, who have Ozzie, a 10-year-old, three-legged Weimaraner, and Roxie, an 11-year-old mixed breed. Both are rescue dogs.

“When the vest comes off at the

end of the day, Natalie is full of energy and keeps my two older dogs very busy wrestling,” Pigg said. “She is always happy and a joy to be around.”

In evaluating the success of this program, Pigg pointed out that they are still in the learning phase, but that, every day she can see the difference Natalie’s

presence makes. “Just walking through the hallways, she brings a smile to the faces of people waiting outside courtrooms.”

Returning to the column of Chief Justice Russell, she tells her readers that Missouri’s highest court

”
– 23rd Circuit Court
Judge Lisa K. Page

has a dog, albeit a memorial bust of one. The statue depicts Old Drum, the dog in the 1870s case that made famous the phrase, “a dog is man’s best friend.” In the closing remarks, the attorney who vindicated Old Drum and his owner delivered a powerful tribute to the universal appeal of dogs, “When all other friends desert, he remains.”

District court clerk Brenda Pigg with Natalie.





The Passing of the Leash

An important rite of passage for dogs, offenders, staff and adopters

When a dog enters the Puppies for Parole program, it's considered the start of a new chapter in the dog's life — a second 'leash' on life, if you will. After spending eight to 12 weeks with a pair of offender handlers, a dog will emerge with the obedience training and social skills that people look for when adopting an animal. It is amazing how the handlers take these unwanted, unadoptable dogs and turn them into loveable, loyal and adorable pets. But this doesn't happen overnight. The dedication and time these handlers put into training dogs is what makes the Puppies for Parole program so special. Aside from their basic training, dogs are also trained to do tricks, while some have been taught to pray, salute and go to sleep on command. The

program's most recent court dog, Sterling, was even trained by her handlers to be sworn in, placing a paw on the Bible while raising her right paw.

These are the little things that make the program so successful, but there is something else that the dogs enjoy, as well as the handlers, and that's graduation. While graduation time may signal the beginning of a new chapter in a dog's life, it can be a difficult time for both the handlers and dogs, which have to part ways.

"It can be difficult for the offender, who has been taking care of a dog for 24 hours a day for eight weeks and has bonded with a dog," said Cyndi Prudden, Puppies for Parole coordinator and deputy director of the Division of Adult Institutions.

"The dog has shown the offender

unconditional love and trust, something that offenders are not used to. After falling in love with the dog, it can be difficult to let the dog go. However, the offenders know that the dog is going to a good home as opposed to living in a shelter, or worse, being euthanized.”

Graduation ceremonies are held at all of the institutions with a Puppies for Parole program. Some institutions hold ceremonies more frequently than others, and adoptive families are even brought into the institution’s visiting rooms to see their new forever companion. While these ceremonies have a lot of pageantry, dogs doing

tricks, speeches and, at times, refreshments, one thing is held in very high esteem — the ‘Passing of the Leash.’ While this ritual is nothing new to ceremonies involving adopting a new dog or service dog, the Puppies for Parole ceremony tends to hold a little more weight because of how the dogs have impacted the lives of the handlers.

“The ‘Passing of the Leash’

occurs when the dog has gone through its eight weeks or more of training,” Prudden said. “After the dog graduates from training and is adopted, a graduation ceremony occurs where the adoptive family is in attendance and the leash and the dog, along with a journal and sometimes other treats, is passed on from the offender handler to the new adoptive family.

“It is the end of one chapter and the beginning of another in the life of a dog. The dog learns to love and trust again and bonds with the offender handler during its time ‘in prison’ and as a result, has hope again. The new chapter begins with the dog going to

its forever home with its forever family to live ‘happily ever after!’”

Although the ‘Passing of the Leash’ signifies the start of a dog’s new life in its new forever home, it also holds a special meaning for the handlers.

“Offender handlers feel good about how they have helped the dog, the community and the new family,” Prudden said. “Some

have even said that they feel like a piece of them is released every time one of the dogs they trained is adopted.”

Tina Sutton, the Puppies for Parole coordinator at the Alcoa Correctional Center in Jefferson City knows the significance of the ‘Passing of the Leash’ because she has witnessed a number of graduation ceremonies, in which more than 200 dogs have been adopted.

“The ‘Passing of the Leash’ during our graduations is a bittersweet moment. It is at that time the handler must say goodbye to his dog and turn over the leash to the new adoptive family,” Sutton said.

But her story of one handler in particular has been a staple of why she continues to hold this part of the graduation ceremony in such high regard.

Shortly after the program was up and running at Alcoa, Sutton got an application from an offender she had known since she was a corrections officer at the Missouri State Penitentiary.

“I knew he was a ‘knucklehead’ back then, but I accepted him into the dog program,” Sutton said.

The handler’s first dog was a little, seven-pound Pomeranian ball of fur. The offender handler once told Sutton that the guys he met while walking the dog made fun of him for being a ‘gangster’ with a ‘foo-foo’ dog. He didn’t have a problem being ridiculed for having a Pomeranian, but wanted to let Sutton know that he had left that ‘gangster’ life behind

him and just wanted to go home. When the day came for the dog to graduate, Sutton called on the dog’s handlers to pass the leash to the new owners,

but only one of the handlers came up.

“I looked over to where the dog handlers sit and there was our ‘knucklehead gangster’ crying because he had to give up his little ‘foo-foo’ dog.

“The impact this program has on these offender handlers is amazing. You can find that the hardest of hearts can melt with a little love from a dog.”

“You can find that the hardest of hearts can melt with a little love from a dog.

– Tina Sutton
Alcoa Correctional Center



From the handler's perspective



Sadie

When I joined the program, I had the idea that I would be helping the dogs become more balanced and happier than the lives they had lived. But I ended up learning about myself just as much as the dogs in learning how to become happier.

When I'm angry, the dogs don't respond to me very well, but when I'm relaxed, the dogs will show a calm-assertive attitude and are much easier to handle and more obedient.

Cole was my first dog. She was a black St. Bernard mix at about 108 pounds. She was already trained and graduated when I was put in her cell. She was a great example of a calm-assertive dog, which helped me to relax when giving the commands of sit, down, stay, come and heel. She was a great practice dog.

Sadie was another black dog, except she was an English Springer mix. She was a bit skittish, but she became the first dog that I learned to properly meet by being calm and relaxed. Being calm is the best language you have with dogs because they

respond better. Once Sadie warmed up to me, it was very rewarding in the love she gave me in return. Her calm-assertive energy ended up being a key factor for a young boy who fell in love with her, and it was a treasure to hand him her leash.

Coco was another dog that I trained. She was a Pug, who had some health issues. Her eyesight was fairly poor, so when training

her, I dealt with her mostly by her scent and sound. She became the most



Cole



Coco

challenging dog for me, but as I mentioned that if I regularly stayed in a calm-assertive state, enforcing the rules as her leader was easy.

This program has helped me learn that if I'm angry, nothing works right, but if I'm calm, things get accomplished much easier. The dogs are such a blessing and I always hope that their new handlers enjoy them as much as I have.

— Handler from
Algoa Correctional Center



Recent Adoptions



Camo - ACC



Tiger - BCC



Dawn - CCC



Spud - CRCC



Ginger - ERDCC



Mya - FCC



Taffie - JCCC



Cole - MCC



Crab Rangoon - MECC



Cadbury - MTC



Chi Chi - NECC



Brutus - OCC



Darby - PCC

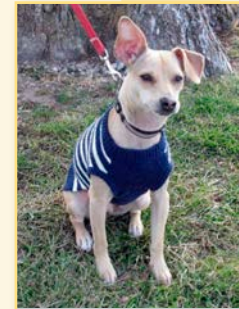


Sam - SCCC



Poppy - SECC

P4P Photo Gallery



Angie - TCC



Jeorgia - WMCC



Ana - WRDCC



PUPPIES FOR PAROLE

For more information about the
Puppies for Parole Program
or to view dogs available for adoption,
please visit **doc.mo.gov** and click on the
Puppies for Parole tab.

You can also find us facebook at
facebook.com/MissouriPuppiesforParole



Missouri Department of Corrections
Spring 2015